

audite



recording: February 7 - 9, 2009
Ev Emmanuel-Kirche, Köln-Rondorf (choir)
Kreuzkirche, Bonn (organ)

equipment: Sennheiser MKH 20, MKH 40;
Neumann KM 130, KM 134, B&K 4006, Schoeps Mk 2
RME Micstasy, ADI8QS, fibre optical connection
24/96 multichannel recording on Sequoia system
Stax SRM Monitor, Geithain RL 906, Dynaudio Air, I5
pcm, 88 kHz / 24bit

pcm-dsd conversion: Philips AFC, Sigma Delta type D

sacd authoring: Philips SACD creator

disc type: hybrid SACD, stereo layer

recording producer: Dipl.-Tonmeister Ludger Böckenhoff

cover photo: © Lydia Steiger, Detmold

photos: Karin Freist-Wissing page II: © Ralf Bauer
Stefan Horz: © Benjamin Hupfer

design: »audite« Musikproduktion

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Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen

Choir and Organ
Christmas Music

Vox BONA
Karin Freist-Wissing
Stefan Horz, organ

soloists:

⑦ Gloria (Jan Sandström)
Anja Barker, Stefanie Watin, Ulrike Steiner, Sopran
Matthias Putzke, Alexander Thobe, Tenor

⑪ „Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen“ (Hugo Distler)
Charlotte Quadt, Alt

Christmas – Feast of Joy and Love

It is the aim of this CD to add further accents to Christmas – both in a contextual and in a musical sense. That is why “soft” and “introverted” works for choir and organ have been included in the programme.

The texts talk about small, tender and fragile things: a rose that has blossomed in winter; a small fragrant flower that is supposed to banish darkness; thorns, that suddenly bore roses when Mary carried her unborn child through them.

All these symbols represent the fragility and transience of human life, in the same way as the Gospels talk of the world's salvation, not by a powerful king, but by the birth of a small child. What can be more fragile, more in need of protection, and also purer than a newborn child?

Another theme becomes apparent in nearly all chosen texts: death and dying. Initially a connection between death, dying and Christmas seems surprising. At

closer inspection, however, one finds it in many Christmas carols, as well as in texts of cantatas and oratorios.

Johann Sebastian Bach, the grandfather of Protestant church music, drew intensively on this connection between life and death, joy and sorrow. His famous Christmas Oratorio closes with the melody of the Passion chorale “O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden”.

The chorale No 33 from Part III of the Christmas Oratorio, “Ich will dich mit Fleiß bewahren” also talks about dying. For people of the baroque era the process of dying was a part of their daily lives: they were constantly confronted with it. But also for people of later ages and epochs the crib and the cross belonged together, as this wonderful poem by Eduard Mörike demonstrates:

Auf ein altes Bild

*In grüner Landschaft Sommerflor
Bei kühlem Wasser, Schilf und Rohr,
Schau wie das Knäblein Sündelos
frei spielt auf der Jungfrau Schooss!*

*Und dort im Walde wonnesam,
ach, grünet schon des Kreuzes Stamm!*

[To an old picture

*In summer's green countryside
With cool water, reeds and canes,
See how the little boy plays,
Without any sin, in the virgin's lap!*

*And there, in that happy woodland,
The cross's stem thrives already!]*

Today, we have banned death as much as possible from our daily lives. The quiet times of the year do not appear anymore in our world. Do we therefore only enjoy great, loud and untarnished happiness?
A false conclusion.

The joy of life which knows about birth and death, dying and transience is perhaps a more tranquil joy. But it is also a deeper, real joy of life because it is in the centre of human being and thus keeps life in balance.

Karin Freist-Wissing

God himself becomes a newborn child in order to redeem humankind: the notion of this belief has fired the imagination of Christians throughout all ages. Ever since the church accepted Mary's status as God's mother as a creed in the 4th century, another layer of traditions associated with Christmas developed around the event: the relationship between Jesus and his mother became the subject of numerous Christmas carols and legends. In Christmas music, the silent side of the feast day was often associated with the scene around the manger; the picture of Mary and her child, or it concentrated completely on the character of Mary.

The carol "Es ist ein Ros entsprungen" [A twig sprang forth] from the 16th century describes the relationship between Mary and Jesus by way of depicting them with an image of a flower and a shoot ("Ros" in this case is short for "Reis", meaning twig). The song became well-known in the setting by Michael Praetorius, one of the most important composers and music scholars from around 1600. At the court of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel he produced numerous works

for instrumental ensembles, choir and keyboard instruments, as well as the so-called "Syntagma musicum", a comprehensive music treatise. His setting "Es ist ein Ros entsprungen" from the "Musae Sioniae" collection of 1609 has become so deeply embedded in Christmas traditions that it is hardly any longer perceived as a work of one composer. It is, however, carefully and subtly crafted, such as in the syncopic line endings and during "und hat ein Blümlein bracht" [and has brought a little flower]: at the end of the phrase an ascending alto motif from the home key depicts the blossoming of the flower. In the second stanza, Praetorius uses the twig and the blossom synonymously, thus focusing solely on Jesus. The text sung here follows a form which is in keeping with the original image.

In the carol "Maria durch ein' Dornwald ging" [Maria walked amid the thorns] the image of twig and blossom is broadened and reinterpreted as a story of a miracle: a withered forest produces blossoms when the pregnant Mary crosses through it. The carol originates from the 19th century, but was long thought to be older than that.

Indeed the calls of "Kyrieleis" and the refrain "Jesus und Maria" seem archaic and could suggest a configuration of a precentor with a responding choir. The composer Heinrich Kaminski contained these two elements in his setting within the flow of freely set parts. He was inspired by Renaissance and Early Baroque polyphony. Kaminski was born in 1886 and first of all intended to become a civil servant, before studying composition and finally running a masterclass at the Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin. He lost his post when the Nuremberg Laws decreed him to be a "half-" or "quarter-Jew".

The carol "Die Nacht ist vorgedrungen" [The night has advanced] was written by Jochen Klepper in 1937, and in 1939 Johannes Petzold composed the mournful melody. The poet and journalist Klepper was made to suffer the persecution of the National Socialists; in 1942 he, his wife and step-daughter took their own lives. In the centre of his text is the dark, guilt-laden human world and the promise of redemption which has accompanied it since the birth of Christ. Wolfgang Seifen, born in 1956 and Professor of liturgical organ playing and improvisation

at the University of Arts in Berlin since 2000, has composed a setting with varying stanzas for the Bona Vox choir. The setting features up to eight separate parts in a seemingly simple homophonic structure, achieving, however, a dense texture.

Stefan Horz' improvisations on Christmas carols continue a popular French tradition which was initiated in the late 18th century with the "Noël composers" producing sets of variations. At the same time, unravelling a text by means of meditation within an improvisation is a genuine form of expression in organ music stretching from the chorale fantasias of the 17th century to improvisations by Charles Tournemire, Max Reger, Marcel Dupré and Olivier Messiaen up to the present day.

Mary and her role within the Nativity form the centre of the choral works by Morten Lauridsen, Hugo Distler and Jan Sandström, as well as the organ works by Max Reger, Johannes Brahms and Arnolt Schlick. Max Reger composed his Orgelstücke op 80, amongst which is the "Ave Maria", in Munich in 1904. The piece depicts the scene of the annunciation of Jesus' birth to Mary. It cre-

ates a mystical but at the same time friendly atmosphere, interrupted by a darker, almost threatening middle section anticipation the passion. "O magnum mysterium" by the American composer of Danish descent, Morten Lauridsen, is enwrapped in the mystique of God's mother. The composer wrote about this commission which was premiered in 1994: "For centuries, composers have been inspired by the beautiful *O magnum mysterium* text depicting the birth of the newborn King amongst the lowly animals and shepherds. This affirmation of God's grace to the meek and the adoration of the Blessed Virgin are celebrated in my setting through a quiet song of profound inner joy."

Johannes Brahms' arrangement of the melody "Es ist ein Ros entsprungen" was published after the composer's death as part of the collection of eleven chorale preludes op 122. In 1896 when he was already seriously ill, Brahms composed some pieces in Bad Ischl for the collection and probably also included earlier works in it – he had been a keen organist as a young man and he never stopped studying Bach's works. Amongst the chorales from op 122,

which are mostly concerned with death, this setting of a Christmas carol seems like a mellifluous Intermezzo. The heavily ornamented melody moves three times from the top part to a middle part; Brahms also fits the tripartite carol into a quadripartite form by inserting varied repeats of the last two lines. The heartfeltness and calmness of the work makes for a well-balanced piece despite the artificial form.

Hugo Distler, born in 1907, wrote his "Weihnachtsgeschichte" op 10 for choir in 1933 when he was organist at St. Jakobi in Lübeck. The old organ by Friedrich Stellwagen, as well as the Protestant church music movement, which often declared Early Baroque music as having model function, were key influences for him. The reference to early vocal polyphony can be heard in this chorale motet, "Es ist ein Ros entsprungen", from the "Weihnachtsgeschichte", featuring a great number of dissonances but also a clear treatment of the different parts. Distler combines the third of the seven stanzas with several lines from the Magnificat, the canticle in praise of the pregnant Mary. At

no point in the bible does her personality come so clearly into the foreground as here, and at the same time, whilst praising God, she avows herself to God's plan of salvation, of which she is a part.

The cantus firmus "Maria zart, von edler Art" [Hail, Virgin sweet, with grace replete] depicts a portrait of Mary in an elaborate three-part arrangement by the renowned and blind organist Arnolt Schlick (1512) in his "Tablatures of various songs of praise and tunes for organs and lutes". This print by Schlick contains tablatures of motets which were intended as models for his colleagues, teaching them the art of instrumental ornamentation and elaborating vocal pieces.

The Swedish composer Jan Sandström, born in 1954, reflects on the special role that is assigned to Michael Praetorius' choral setting of "Es ist ein Ros entsprungen" within the Christmas traditions. Praetorius' well-known setting is performed by a solo choir; at the same time it is embedded in almost timeless, dissonantly floating soundscapes of the broadly extended choir.

Part III of Johann Sebastian Bach's "Christmas Oratorio" tells of the adoration of the shepherds and their farewell from the stable. The shepherds have always been popular characters in the Christmas story: in their fear and their joy, and with their adoration and circulating of the glad tidings they were the very first to celebrate Christmas. This identification of shepherds and congregation manifested itself in countless "pastorals" imitating the wind instruments and simple techniques – major keys, bourdons and tunes – of the shepherds. The "Pastorella" BWV 590 is ascribed to this tradition. This becomes most obvious in the first two of the four movements: two parts develop playfully above a bourdon, a sustained bass note, with a canon-like structure in the first movement and song-like one in the second. The third movement also begins with a bourdon passage; however it then moves away from that in order to make way for the expressive development of the upper part. The last movement consists of a lively, playful fugue. We cannot be certain that Bach is the originator of all this; it may be that a musician collected the music from his

own environment and then arranged it into a pastoral – and until this day this music is associated with Christmas.

Another constituent of the customs surrounding Christmas is the carol “Ich steh’ an deiner Krippen hier” [I stand here by your crib] by Paul Gerhardt which was first published in 1653 in the Berlin hymnbook “Praxis Pietatis Melica” by his friend Johann Krüger. It is one of Gerhardt’s most heartfelt “I-hymns”: the believer is meditating on his faith by imagining himself to be part of the event. Gerhardt created a new form of hymn which differed from the instructive Lutheran hymns, such as “Nun freut euch, lieben Christen gmein” [Rejoice, all dear Christians] with whose melody “Ich steh an deiner Krippen hier” was sung for a long time. In Part VI of his “Christmas Oratorio” Bach also used the tune known to the congregation in his choral writing. It was only the bourgeois Bach-cult of around 1900 that initiated the use of the aria melody which Bach had composed for the “Musicalisches Gesang-Buch”, the so-called “Schemellisches Gesangbuch”, published in Leipzig in 1736.

Another of Gerhardt’s “I-hymns” is the Christmas carol “Fröhlich soll mein Herze springen” [My heart will leap joyfully]. Bach used the stanza “Ich will dich mit Fleiß bewahren” [I want to keep you with diligence] in Part III of his “Christmas Oratorio” as the congregation’s response to the farewell of the shepherds from the manger. With the words “Ich will dir leben hier, dir will ich abfahren” [I want to live here with you, die with unswerving faith] it makes the connection between the joy of Christmas and Christian life on the one hand and pious death on the other. As with all “I-hymns” by Gerhardt, this develops into a personal meditation, this time focussing on Mary and her position at this point of the Christmas story: “Maria aber behielt alle diese Worte und bewegte sie in ihrem Herzen.” [Mary kept all these words and pondered them in her heart]. She thus becomes the archetypal devout Christian, quietly meditating about her salvation.

Friedrich Sprondel
Translation Viola Scheffel

VOX BONA
KAMMERCHOR DER KREUZKIRCHE BONN –
Chamber Choir of the Kreuzkirche Bonn

Vox Bona performs a wide variety of music, ranging from medieval Easter Singspiele and madrigals of the Renaissance to Bach oratorios and cantatas, Romantic songs for choir and motets to performances of contemporary music and experimental choral improvisations. The forty young singers of the chamber choir have acquired this diverse repertoire thanks to continuous work under the direction of Karin Freist-Wissing. The musicians are committed to creating carefully themed concert programmes and to finding new ways in which music, art and improvisation can be combined. The choir regularly performs with professional orchestras and undertakes many prestigious concert tours in Germany and abroad. The constant progress of the choir is documented not only by its successful concerts and CD releases but also by its awards:

1996: 1st prize at the Regional Choral Competition in North Rhine-Westphalia
1997: 2nd prize at the National Choral Competition of the German Music Council
2001: 4 prizes at the Second International Brahms Choral Competition Musica Mundi
2005: 1st prize at the Regional Choral Competition in North Rhine-Westphalia
2007: 1st prize at the International Choral Competition in Budapest



KARIN FREIST-WISSING

studied church music and conducting at the Hochschule für Musik in Detmold, Germany. She has been director of music at the Bonn Kreuzkirche since 1990. Under her artistic leadership, the ensembles KANTOREI, KAMMERCHOR VOX BONA and SINFONIE-ORCHESTER have become leading ensembles in the Köln-Bonn region, winning several awards, making CD and radio recordings and undertaking concert tours in Germany and abroad.

In 2000, Karin Freist-Wissing was awarded a scholarship by the German Music Council. From 2003 until 2005 she taught choral conducting at the Hochschule für Musik in Detmold.



STEFAN HORZ

studied church music at the Musikhochschule in Cologne and organ with Prof. Wolfgang Zerer at the Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Hamburg. Thereafter, Stefan Horz returned to Cologne to study harpsichord, graduating with distinction and later also passing the harpsichord concert exam in the class of Prof. Ketil Haugsand. Stefan Horz was greatly influenced by masterclasses given by Bob van Asperen, Glenn Wilson, Harald Vogel and Michael Radulescu.

He has performed as a soloist and as a chamber musician with his own ensembles, most notably at the Göttingen Handel Festival, the Styriarte Festival in Graz, the Rheingau Festival and at the Alte Oper in Frankfurt.

In 1998 Stefan Horz was appointed organist at the renowned Kreuzkirche in Bonn, succeeding Johannes Geffert.

Die Orgel in der Evangelischen Kreuzkirche Bonn

Erbauer: Paul Ott, Göttingen 1956

Disposition: Prof. Gottfried Grote, Berlin

Restauration: Firma J.W. Walker, GB-Brandon (1982) / Firma Karl Schuke, Berlin (2001)

Gehäusegestaltung: Baurat Heinrich Otto Vogel, Trier

Bemalung der Flügel: Hans Gottfried von Stockhausen, Eßlingen

Brustwerk IV

Holzflöte	4'	Holzgedackt	8'	Quintflöte	1 1/3'	Tremulant	
Waldflöte	2'	Principal	2'	Terzzimbel 3f.	1/6'	Baerpfeife	8'

Rückpositiv I

Quintade	8'	Rohrgedackt	8'	Praestant	8'	Spitzgedackt	8'
Blockflöte	4'	Principal	4'	Principal	4'	Trichterflöte	4'
Nachthorn	2'	Oktave	2'	Weitprincipal	2'	Praestantflöte	2'
Sifflöte	1'	Scharf	4 f.	Mixtur 4 f.	1 1/3'	Zimbel 2 f.	1/6'
Nasat	2 2/3'	Quinte	1 1/3'	Dulzian	16'	Stillgedackt	16'
Septime	1 1/7'	Terz	1 3/5'	Trompete	8'	Dolkan	8'
None	8/9'	Rankett	16'	Schalmei	4'	Schwebung	8'
Tremulant		Krummhorn	8'	Oboe	8'	Tremulant	

Hauptwerk II

Gemshorn	8'	Quintade	16'	Principal	16'	Quintbass	10 2/3'
Koppelflöte	8'	Principal	8'	Oktave	8'	Gedackt	8'
Rohrflöte	4'	Oktave	4'	Oktave	4'	Hohlflöte	4'
Quinte	2 2/3'	Oktave	2'	Schwiegel	1'	Gemshorn	2'
Trompete	16'	Großmixtur 6f.	2 2/3'	Rauschpfeife 3f.	4'	Sesquialtera 2f.	5 1/3'
Trompete	8'	Scharf 4 f.	1/3'	Hintersatz 4f.	2 2/3'	Subbass	16'
				Baßzimbel 3f.	1'	Trompete	4'
				Trompete 8'		Posaune	16'

Koppeln: OW/HW, RP/HW, OW/RP, HW/P, OW/P, RP/P;

wahlweise mechanische oder elektrische Koppeln; Zimbelstern;

Oberwerk und Brustwerk schwellbar; Schleifladen, mechanische Spieltraktur, elektrische Registertraktur; Setzeranlage mit 4.000 Kombinationen

**Michael Praetorius:
Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen**

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen
aus einer Wurzel zart,
wie uns die Alten sungen,
von Jesse kam die Art
und hat ein Blümlein bracht
mittten im kalten Winter
wohl zu der halben Nacht.

Das Röslein das ich meine,
davon Jesaja sagt,
ist Maria die reine,
die uns das Blümlein bracht.
Aus Gottes ewgem Rat
Hat sie ein Kind geboren
Und blieb ein reine Magd

Das Blümelein so kleine,
das duftet uns so süß;
Mit seinem hellen Scheine,
vertreibt's die Finsternis:
Wahr' Mensch und wahrer Gott,
hilft uns aus allem Leide,
rettet von Sünd und Tod.

**Heinrich Kaminski:
Maria durch ein Dornwald ging**

Maria durch ein Dornwald ging,
Kyrieleison,
Maria durch ein Dornwald ging,
der hat in siebn Jahr kein Laub getragen,
Jesus und Maria.

Was trug Maria unter ihrem Herzen,
Kyrieleison,
Ein kleines Kindlein ohne Schmerzen,
das trug Maria unter ihrem Herzen,
Jesus und Maria.

Da haben die Dornen Rosen getragen,
Kyrieleison,
Als das Kindlein durch den Wald getragen,
da haben die Dornen Rosen getragen,
Jesus und Maria.

**Wolfgang Seifen:
Die Nacht ist vorgedrungen**

Die Nacht ist vorgedrungen, der Tag ist nicht mehr fern.
So sei nun lobgesungen dem hellen Morgenstern!
Auch wer zur Nacht geweinet, der stimme froh mit ein.
Der Morgenstern bescheinet auch deine Angst und Pein.

Dem alle Engel dienen, wird nun ein Kind und Knecht.
Gott selber ist erschienen zur Sühne für sein Recht.
Wer schuldig ist auf Erden, verhüll nicht mehr sein Haupt.
Er soll errettet werden, wenn er dem Kinde glaubt.

Die Nacht ist schon im Schwinden, macht euch zum Stalle auf!
Ihr sollt das Heil dort finden, das aller Zeiten Lauf
Von Anfang an verkündet, seit eure Schuld geschah.
Nun hat sich euch verbündet, den Gott selbst ausersah.

Noch manche Nacht wird fallen auf Menschenleid und –schuld.
Doch wandert nun mit allender Stern der Gotteshuld.
Beglänzt von seinem Lichte, hält euch kein Dunkel mehr,
von Gottes Angesichte, kam euch die Rettung her.

Gott will im Dunkel wohnen und hat es doch erhellt.
Als wollte er belohnen, so richtet er die Welt.
Der sich den Erdkreis baute, der lässt den Sünder nicht.
Wer hier dem Sohn vertraute, kommt dort aus dem Gericht.

**Morten Lauridsen:
O Magnum Mysterium**

O magnum mysterium, et admirabile sacramentum.

O magnum mysterium, ut animalia viderent Dominum natum,
Jacentem in praesepio!

Beata Virgo, cuius viscera meruerunt,
Beata Virgo, portare Dominum Christum.

Alleluja!

**Hugo Distler:
Es ist ein Ros entsprungen,
Choralmotette aus der
Weihnachtsgeschichte op. 10**

1. Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen aus einer Wurzel zart,
als uns die Alten sungen,
von Jesse kam die Art und hat ein Blümlein bracht
mitten im kalten Winter wohl zu der halben Nacht.

2. Das Röslein das ich meine,
davon Jesaias sagt,
ist Maria die reine,
die uns das Blümlein bracht.
Aus Gottes ewgem Rat
Hat sie ein Kind geboren
Und blieb ein reine Magd

3. Wir bitten dich von Herzen,
du edle Königin,
durch deines Sohnes Schmerzen,
wann wir fahren dahin
aus diesem Jammertal.
Du wollest uns geleiten
bis in der Engel Saal.

Alt Solo:
Meine Seele erhebt den Herren, und mein Geist freut b sich Gottes, meines Heilands, denn er hat die Niedrigkeit seiner Magd angesehen.

Siehe, von nun an werden mich preisen alle Kindeskind, denn er hat große Dinge an mir getan, der da mächtig ist, und des Name heilig ist.
Seine Barmherzigkeit währet immer, für und für, bei denen, die ihn fürchten.

4. Das Blümlein so kleine,
das duftet uns so süß;
Mit seinem hellen Scheine,
vertreibt's die Finsternis:
Wahr' Mensch und wahrer Gott,
hilft uns aus allem Leide,
rettet von Sünd und Tod.

5. Die Hirten zu der Stunden machten sich auf die Fahrt;
Das Kindlein sie bald funden mit seiner Mutter zart.
Die Engel sangen schon,
sie lobten Gott den herren,
in seinem höchsten Thron.

6. Lob Ehr sein Gott dem Vater,
dem Sohn und heilgen Geist.
Maria, Gottes Mutter,
dein Hilf an uns beweis
und bitt dein liebes Kind,
dass es uns woll behüten,
verzeihn unser Sünd.

7. So singen wir all Amen,
das heißt: nun wird es wahr,
was wir begehrn allsamen.
O Jesu hilf uns darin
deines Vaters Reich,
drin wollen wir dich loben.
O Gott uns das verleih.

Jan Sandström:
Es ist ein Ros entsprungen

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen
aus einer Wurzel zart,
als uns die Alten sung'en, v
on Jesse kam die Art
und hat ein Blümlein bracht
mitten im kalten Winter
wohl zu der halben Nacht.

Johann Sebastian Bach:
Ich steh an deiner Krippen hier

Ich steh an deiner Krippen hier
o Jesu du mein Leben,
ich komme bring und schenke dir,
was du mir hast gegeben.
Nimm hin es ist mein Geist und Sinn,
Herz, Seel und Mut nimm alles hin
und lass dir's wohlgefallen.

Ich lag in tiefster Todesnacht,
du warest meine Sonne,
die Sonne, die mir zugebracht,
Licht Leben Freud und Wonne.
O Sonne, die das werte Licht
des Glaubens in mir zugericht,
wie schön sind deine Strahlen!

Ich sehe dich mit Freuden an
und kann mich nicht sattsehen;
Und weil ich nun nichts weiter kann,
bleib ich anbetend stehen.
O dass mein Sinn ein Abgrund wär
und meine Seel ein weites Meer,
dass ich dich möchte fassen.

Johann Sebastian Bach:
Ich will dich mit Fleiß bewahren (Weihnachtsoratorium Teil 3)

Ich will dich mit Fleiß bewahren,
ich will dir leben hier,
dir will ich abfahren,
mit dir will ich endlich schweben voller Freud ohne Zeit dort im andern Leben.

